

THE LEAD- STACKER

NUMBER 16
AUGUST, 1986



ARKANSAS TERRITORIAL RESTORATION

SOMETIME AGO I mentioned the Arkansas Territorial Restoration and their Washington hand press. Ward Schori encouraged me to go down there and check it out. Located in downtown Little Rock, the Restoration is a collection of restored or rebuilt buildings representing what the city looked like in the early 1800s. One of the buildings is the office of the *Arkansas Gazette*, one of the first newspapers west of the Mississippi.

After some discussions with various officials of the Restoration, I have been allowed to do some work in the old print shop. The shop itself isn't much; a small two-room brick building. The front room is an office with a desk, table, and chair. The back room is almost as sparse; a wooden type stand and a couple of type cases with almost no type, and a St. Louis Type Foundry Washington hand press.

I would eventually like to convince the Restoration officials to expand the shop to make it a working shop, but to keep within the intent of the Restoration and maintain the appearance of a shop in the *early* 1800s. This would mean no *modern* platen presses. We know that the first press brought into Arkansas Territory was a Ramage. Unfortunately, Ramage presses are rather hard to come by these days, so we'll have to make do with the Washington.

At a recent craft show held at the Restoration, I set up a poster commemorating the event, using some of my antique wood type, and printed it on the Washington during the show. The reaction of the visitors amazed me. People were fascinated by the process; a typical comment was "magical". This process, so simple, so ancient, so (usually) easy, and now almost obsolete, is still the black art, practiced by a few magicians who still know the old secrets. How paradoxical, in this age of electron charging photo copiers, photo laser typesetting, densitometer scanning web offset presses, (truly magical stuff) that the process of hand inking movable type and pressing paper into the type is a mystery to so many people.

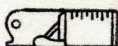
Let's not let the ancient and dark secrets of our craft die with us. Teach someone letterpress printing now.



TYP- CHONDRIAC

WELL FOLKS, I've done it again. On the way back from the Austin Wayzgoose, I bought 300 cases of type. My "dream shop" with the luxury of plenty of room to work, has now become a bit crowded. Five platen presses, seven table top presses, a Ludlow, paper cutter, saw, big proof press, big imposing table, a Washington, and approximately 600 cases of type tends to make *any* shop hard to get around in. I loved Sheldon Wesson's comparison of his type collection to a harem, "You can't use them all; but isn't it nice to know that you have a choice to fit any mood."

What is this madness of collecting type and equipment? Robert Halbert of Tyler, who owns a sizable collection of Monotypes and mats in addition to a lot of other printing equipment, said it best, "I've turned my hobby of printing into a hobby of hauling equipment." But why do we do it? A desire to preserve the past? An urge to save something that still has some usefulness (probably only to us) rather than see it go to the landfill or scrap metal dealer? A passion to own one of everything? I really don't think there is an answer; one of the mysteries of the universe. I do know that I'll keep collecting as long as my back and my budget hold out. The next step is probably an annex to the shop.



SHOP NOTES

KIM SCOTT VISITED the shop recently and we had a great time turning out a very limited edition poster on the Washington. What a pleasure it is to work with someone on a project and pool each other's ideas and knowledge. Visitors to my shop are always welcome.

SAGGY BOTTOMS? I've been a printer for twenty-five years yet I am always learning new tricks. Here's a trick I noticed on one the cases I got in Texas. Cases that are fully loaded have a tendency to have bottoms that are seperated from the partitions. By drilling a hole on either side of a partition, and inserting a wire over the partition and though the holes then twisting the wire together on the backside, the bottom will be drawn up against the partition. Make sure there are no letters underneath the partitions before starting. Trim the wires within a quarter inch of the backside, and cinch down into the wood to prevent hand injury. If done carefully, all this can be done without removing any type from the case.

SEVERAL SUGGESTIONS have been received concerning my plans for a portable print shop and I sincerely appreciate those who wrote. The most common suggestion was to put more than one font in a case.

It seems that a portable shop idea wasn't original (as I suspected). Bob Oldham already has a shop built and I believe Al Fick has been toying with the idea for awhile.

THE LEADSTACKER — *An ongoing typographical experiment perpetrated upon unsuspecting members of AAPA and APA along with a few innocent bystanders.*

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